

A NOTE ON THE ORIGIN OF THE NAME “DARBHANGA”

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Today Darbhanga is one of the districts of Bihar; and its head-quarter is located in the town known by that name. Until 1875, it was a part of the Tirhut District as then constituted.

The purpose of this note is to investigate as to how the name was given to that particular place.

In the *Gazetteer* of the Darbhanga district¹ some light has been thrown on it. It is stated :

“It takes its name from its chief town; and local patriotism insists that Darbhanga is derived from *Dura-Banga* (*Dvāra-Banga* ?) or Dar-i-Bangal meaning the door of Bengal. This derivation appears, however, to be philologically impossible and also historically incorrect, as the division between Bengal and Bihar has always been much further to the east. It seems more probable that the name is derived from that of the traditional founder of the town, one Darbhāngi Khan, a Muhammadan free-booter, of whom little or nothing is known.....”

Who was this Darbhāngi Khan, the traditional founder of the town ? When was it founded ? We have no material to conclusively ascertain these, so far. The earliest reference to this name is found in a work, *Bhṛṅgadūta*, by Paṇḍita Gangānanda Jhā, a maithila Sanskrit Writer of the 17th Century A. D. (1615-1684). Even Vidyāpati mentions Sakurī² (modern Sakri about 12 miles from Darbhanga) but not Darbhanga. The *Bhṛṅgadūta* reference is as follows :

[तस्याः पापः परमविमलं सन्निपीयानिरामा-

गारां कामाशुष दरभंगा राजधानीमुपेयाः ।

भ्रातर्यस्याः सुरपतिपुरी मूढं ब्रम्ह्यासितानां

सौधश्चेत्ती हसति ध्वलज्योतिषां कैतवेन ॥५५॥]

(1) Bengal district Gazetteers (Darbhanga) Vol. VI. p. 1.

(2) सक्कुरीपुर सरोवर कर्ता हेमहस्तिरथदानविदग्धः ।

भाति यस्य जनको रणजेतादेव सिंहनृपतिर्गुणराशिः ॥

.....पुरुष-परीक्षा (चन्द्र कवि-कृत अनुवाद-संहिता)

प्रथम....राजप्रेस, दरभंगा, पृ० २५१ ।

*tasyāḥ pāthah paramavimalam sannipiyābhirāmā
gārām kāmāyudha 'Darbhaga' rajadhani mupeyah
bhrātaryasyāḥ surapatipurī mūrdhva madhyāsitanām
saudhaśreṇī hasati dhavalajyotiṣām kaitavena. (55)^a*

This work is on the lines of the *Meghadūta* of Kālidāsa. The author sends his message from a far distant place to his wife at home in village Sarisab through a Bhṛnga (a large black bee) and indicates the route that it is to follow. In that route the Bhṛnga is to reach the bank of the river Bagmati and "*Tasyāḥ*" in the *śloka* refers to that river. He advises it to drink the pure water of the Bagmati, and proceed to the Capital City of Darbhanga which abounds with beautiful palaces and looks like the weapon of Kāmādeva⁴. He says that the row of palaces with bright lights on the top were as they were deriding the heaven itself.

The town of Darbhanga is on the bank of the Bagmati even to-day; and the mere fact that the poet mentions 'Darbhaga' and not 'Darbhanga' need not ordinarily lead us to doubt the identity. Consideration of metre might be responsible for the variation of name in the *śloka*.

The verse shows that in the 17th Century it was a very rich town full of palaces bedecked with flowers and light. It indicates its prosperous condition during these days.

The town in that flourishing condition must have been established before the author composed the poem. Probably *Bhṛngadūta* was written when the Sarcar-i-Tirhut was in the hands of Sundara Ṭhākura of the Khaṇḍavalā dynasty under Mughal suzerainty. This presumption is based on the fact that although Paṇḍit Gaṅgānanda Jha's life covers the period in which Puruṣottama Ṭhākura, Sundara Ṭhākura and Mahinātha Ṭhākura ruled over Sarcar-i-Tirhut, he was in the prime of youth during Sundara Ṭhākura's time. We do not know the exact date of the composition of *Bhṛngadūta*.

The seat of these chiefs of the Khaṇḍavalā dynasty at that time was not Darbhanga but Bhour. A resident officer of the Sovereign was however always stationed at Darbhanga and the Khaṇḍavalā Chiefs maintained close relationship with him. They had their own camps near about the Darbhanga town as its present muhallas, Maheśapattī, Subhāṅkara-

(3) Mithila Tatva Vimarsha (Uttardha) p. 62

(4) Weapons of Kāmādeva....

अरविन्द मशोकञ्च चूतञ्च न मल्लिका ।

नीलोत्पलञ्च पञ्चैते पञ्चवाणस्य सायकाः ॥ अमरकोशः ॥

pura, Puruṣottamapur, Sundarapura etc. indicate. Therefore, the city must have been built up under the patronage of Resident Subedar of Mohammedan sovereigns. The seat of Khaṇḍavalā Chief was permanently transferred to Darbhanga, later on, by Mahārāja Mādhava Siṃha of the Khaṇḍavalā dynasty.

A plausible theory about the origin of the name "Darbhanga" appears to be that when Mahārāja Śivasimha of the Oinavāra dynasty fought a decisive battle with Sultan Ibrahim Shah in L.S. 297 (A. D. 1406 or 1414; whatever it may be. The historians differ in calculating the L.S.) near his capital Gajarathapura and his forces were completely defeated and crushed, the place was named Dalabhanga to commemorate the breaking up (bhanga) of Śiva Siṃha's force (dala). The word 'dala' become daḍa or 'dara' in common parlance and assumed the form 'Daḍa-bhanga' or 'Darbhanga' (*ralayoḥalayosca sāmyaṃ*).

It might be that the General of Ibrahim Shah's forces was nicknamed 'Darbhāṅgi Khan' after the battle. Śhivadhārā, where the battle was fought, is only 2 miles from Gajarathapura (now called Sivasimhapura) and to the east of the river Bagmati. There is still a road right from Hajipur to Darbhanga via Muzaffarpur which goes up to Forbesganj in Purnea district. Probably, the forces of Ibrahim Shah was marching through that route to meet his adversary Śiva Siṃha at Śivasimhapura. The battle, as Dr. Upendra Thakur says in his *History of Mithila* (p. 318), "was horribly sanguinary resulting in the conversion of battle field into the gigantic heaps of heads of soldiers, horses, elephants etc. Śiva Siṃha stubbornly resisted but the fickle fate finally deserted him. His sudden collapse marked the end of a glorious era. The Kingdom of Gajarathapura assumed a sad spectacles of desertion and gloom...".

The name "Kabrāghata", it is held, owes its origin to the fact that Muslim soldiers killed in the battle were buried there. The bodies of the Hindu soldiers who were killed possibly remained uncared for. In course of time they became heaps of bones and were later mixed up with earth. The place is taken to be the origin of the present day Harāhi. Both Kabrāghata and Harāhi are now muhallas of the Darbhanga town.

This theory I think deserves due consideration both from historical and geographical points of view.